

# Adolescence

Introductory Overview

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## Multidisciplinary Approach

- Draws upon multiple disciplines
  - Six primary disciplines
  - Which are?
  
- Goal: Integration into a coherent picture of adolescent development

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## Boundaries of Adolescence

- Roughly defined as (ages)?
- Other ways of defining boundaries?
  
- Series of passages from immaturity to maturity
- Early, middle, late phases

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## Framework of course/text

- Three general components
  - Fundamental Changes
  - Contexts
  - Psychosocial Development
- None of these exist in isolation
- Interactions within and between components

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## Fundamental Changes

- Biological
- Cognitive
- Social transitions
  
- These changes are universal

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## Contexts

- Great variability over time
  
- Family
- Peer group
- School
- Work and leisure settings

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## ● ● ● | Psychosocial Development

- Identity
- Autonomy
- Intimacy
- Sexuality
- Achievement
- Psychosocial problems

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## ● ● ● | Theoretical perspectives

- Biological
- Organismic
- Learning
- Sociological
- Historical and Anthropological
  
- Combination perspective – systems theory

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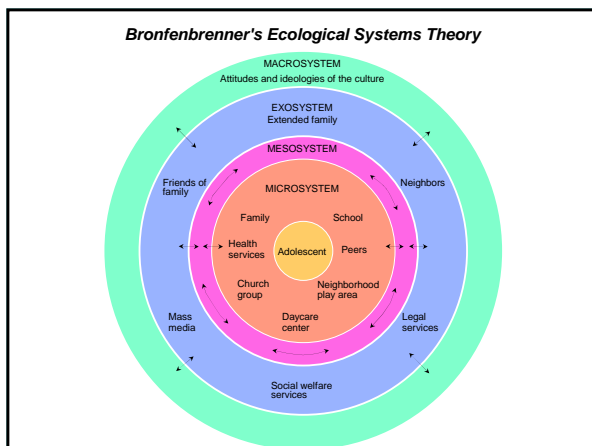
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## Scientific study

- o Many of our ideas about adolescents based on stereotypes
- o Change is inevitable
- o Is stress inevitable?
  
- o Scientific evidence often not consistent with our “common sense”

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## ***Adolescence***

Chapter 1: Biological Transitions

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## Puberty Affected by Context

- o Timing of physical changes in adolescence varies by
  - Regions of the world
  - Socioeconomic class
  - Ethnic group
  - Historical era
- o Example: Menarche (first menstruation)
  - U.S. average 12 to 13 years
  - Lumi (New Guinea) average > 18 years

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## Puberty: An Overview

- The Endocrine System
  - No new hormones are produced and no new bodily systems develop at puberty
  - A feedback loop develops involving the
    - pituitary gland
    - hypothalamus
    - gonads

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## Puberty: Five Chief Physical Manifestations

- Growth spurt
- Further development of the gonads
- Development of secondary sex characteristics
- Changes in body composition
- Changes in circulation and respiration

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## The Endocrine System: A Feedback Loop

- Feedback loop: HPG Axis
  - **H**ypothalamus
  - **P**ituitary gland,
  - **G**onads
- Gonads release androgens and estrogens

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● ● ● | Roles Played by Hormones

- Organizational Role
  - Prenatally hormones “program” the brain
  - Patterns of behavior due to this organization may not appear until adolescence  
example: aggression
- Activational Role
  - Increase in certain hormones activates changes  
example: secondary sex characteristics

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● ● ● | Somatic Development:  
Changes in Stature/  
Dimensions of the Body

- Adolescent growth spurt
  - Simultaneous release of growth hormones, thyroid hormones, and androgens
- Peak Height Velocity
  - Time that adolescent is growing most quickly
- Average female growth spurt is 2 years before the average male growth spurt

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● ● ● | Somatic Development:  
Changes in Stature/  
Dimensions of the Body

- Skeletal changes
  - Bones become harder, denser, more brittle
  - Conclusion of puberty
    - Closing of ends of long bones
    - Growth in height is terminated
- Relative proportions of body fat/muscle change for boys and for girls
- Changes in the circulatory & respiratory systems

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● ● ● | Individual Differences in Pubertal Maturation

- Pubertal maturation
  - an interaction between genes and environment
  - Differences in timing/rate among individuals in the same general environment result chiefly from genetic factors
  - Two key environmental influences: nutrition and health
  - Exposure to pheromones

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● ● ● | Group Differences in Pubertal Maturation

- Three group comparisons of average age of menarche
  - Across countries
  - Among SES groups within a country
  - Within same populations but different eras
    - Secular trend – due to improved nutrition, better sanitation, better control of infectious diseases

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● ● ● | Group Differences in Pubertal Maturation

- Secular trend
  - Leveling off in industrialized nations
  - U.S. average age of menarche has not changed in 30 years
  - Onset of puberty has continued to occur earlier among African American girls in the U. S.

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## Psychological/Social: Early or Late Maturation

- *Perception* of being an early or late maturer is more important in affecting one's feelings than the reality
- Early maturation *does* bring social advantages
- But early maturation is associated with
  - More drug and alcohol use
  - Precocious sexual activity
- Context is important to consider

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## Eating Disorders

- Basal Metabolism Rate
  - The minimal amount of energy one uses when resting
- Obesity
  - The most common eating disorder among adolescents
- Disordered eating
  - Patterns of eating attitudes and behaviors that are unhealthy.
- Deviation from the "ideal" physique can lead to loss of self-esteem and other problems in the adolescent's self-image

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## Eating Disorders

- Studies of magazines, 1970 to 1990
  - Ideal body shape became slimmer
  - Ideal body shape became less curvaceous
- Adolescents with these eating disorders have an extremely disturbed body image.
- Bulimia
  - Eating binges; force themselves to vomit
  - 3% of adolescents are genuine bulimics
- Anorexia
  - Starve themselves to keep weight down
  - Fewer than 1/2 of 1% of adolescents

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● ● ● Physical Health and Health Care in Adolescence

- One of the healthiest periods of the lifespan
- Threat to health: Psychosocial Causes (not natural causes)
- Reducing health compromising behaviors
- Increasing health enhancing behaviors
- School-based health centers
  - 10% are family planning visits
  - Most visits involve injuries, acute illnesses and mental health

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● ● ● Physical Health and Health Care in Adolescence

- PARADOX: Healthy period of lifespan
- But nearly 1 in 15 adolescents has at least one disabling chronic illness
  - such as mental disorders (depression)
  - respiratory illnesses (asthma)
  - muscular and skeletal disorders (arthritis)

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● ● ● Adolescent Mortality

- 45% of teen deaths
  - Car accidents
  - Other unintentional injuries
- 30% of teen deaths
  - Homicide and suicide



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